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TEACHER EFFICACY
AND ITS IMPACT ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

by

Carissa Freeman

A Research Project Presented in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Education

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ABSTRACT

Teacher Efficacy and Its Impact on Student Achievement

It is apparent that student achievement is of great concern to the stakeholders of the U.S. educational system. School reform not only heavily depends on teachers, but their belief in their own ability to impact student achievement, otherwise known as teacher efficacy. Teacher leaders, administrators, and policy makers have examined various philosophies, methodologies and strategies to support efficacious teachers so that their talent and skills are retained within the classroom, and thereby positively impact student achievement.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Education in the 21st Century has become a high stakes game in which teachers and administrators alike are heavily scrutinized for student achievement. Perhaps none feel the pressure of this scrutiny more than teachers. In place of confidence and empowerment, many teachers feel ineffective and ill equipped to reach students today. Student achievement continues to plummet as a result of student disengagement. The future success of the educational system in the United States is dependent upon many things, one of which is the belief teachers have in themselves and their colleagues to deliver worthwhile and adequate instruction to help their students perform at or above prescribed academic standards. Teacher efficacy, both on an individualized and collective scale, is one of the strongest predictors of student achievement (Ross & Bruce, 2007).

Statement of the Problem

Miskel, McDonald, and Bloom (1983, as cited in Lee, 2002) linked teacher efficacy to teacher behaviors which they concluded positively affect student: (a) achievement, (b) motivation, (c) self-concept, and (d) overall enthusiasm for school. If teacher efficacy, the belief that one has the ability to bring about learning, is vulnerable to the political scheme of standardization of assessment, which amplifies the stress of the job and results in good teachers who abandon the profession, then school reform must become centered on strategies to retain and further develop good teachers. Preservice

educators, inservice educators, and school administrators must examine ways to increase and fortify teacher efficacy.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project was to examine various methodologies to increase teacher efficacy and thereby empower teachers to become positive change agents within their profession. This author presented these methodologies in the form of a PowerPoint presentation so that school leaders and teachers may reference them in discussions to increase teacher efficacy with an overall goal of a positive impact on student achievement.

Chapter Summary

It was this researcher's position that teacher efficacy is at the core of school reform. However, a mere production of messages to improve or be held responsible for the current failures of U.S. education to an audience of teachers would be unfruitful and unfair. Teachers must be supported and treated as professionals as they seek to rekindle lost enthusiasm for their career. In Chapter 2, the Review of Literature, this researcher presented background material to support this position and provided suggestions for methods to increase teacher efficacy as well as examples of the behaviors of highly efficacious teachers. In Chapter 3, the method, target audience, goals, and procedures for the development of this project were outlined.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Lee (2002) stated the “teacher’s beliefs and practices are ultimately at the heart of student success” (p. 67). Teacher efficacy, the expectation that one possesses the talent and abilities to bring about student learning, is central to school reform. Motivation, a building block of teacher efficacy, influences teacher: (a) performance, (b) commitment, and (c) retention. Furthermore, it is with this motivation, filtered through the levels of efficacy, that teachers determine what type of an impact they will have on students. Tucker et al. (2005) concluded that teacher efficacy was linked directly to student achievement.

Efficacy

Bandura (1977, as cited in Lee, 2002), widely known for his extensive research on the complex and multidimensional constructs of teacher efficacy and its affects on behavior, noted that efficacy develops over time through an individual’s sense of competence to complete a task or attain a goal. The outcome expectancy of the individual predicts his or her behavior based on the interpretation of information received from four major sources: (a) mastery of experience, (b) vicarious experiences, (c) verbal persuasion, and (d) physiological states. Mastery of experience, the most powerful source to impact behavior, is grounded in previous results and accomplishments. With each additional success or failure, the individual either raises or lowers his or her perceived level of competency. Through vicarious experience, an individual determines

his or her own competency based on observations of a colleague's success. An individual filters verbal persuasion, positive or negative feedback, to determine his or her level of competence. Physiological states, emotional stimulations experienced in specific situations, become embedded in the memory of the individual which he or she later uses to determine perceived competence. With the use of these four sources of information, (i.e. mastery of experience, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological state), the individual formulates his or her own personal beliefs and motivational systems which influence the amount of effort the individual is willing to put forth.

In addition, Bandura (1977, as cited in Lee, 2002) determined that efficacy levels predict and describe behavior such as: (a) self-organization, (b) proactiveness, (c) self-regulation, (d) self-reflection, (e) goal selection, (f) anticipation of outcomes, (g) regulation, (h) resiliency, and (j) stress management (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). Amor, Conroy-Oseguera, Cox, King, McDonell, Pascal, A., et al. (1976, as cited in Skaalvik & Skaalvik) used the following two statements to determine the level of effort the participant teachers of their study were willing to invest in the aforementioned activities: (a) "When it comes right down to it, a teacher really can't do much because most student's motivation and performance depend on his or her home environment," (b) "If I really try hard, I can get through to even the most difficult and unmotivated students". It is obvious that the latter of the two statements describes a highly efficacious teacher, while the former depicts the thought process of a teacher of low efficacy. These distinctive levels of efficacy aid one to understand why there exists such a variance in levels of achievement experienced by students.

High Efficacy Teachers vs. Low Efficacy Teachers

The high and low efficacy effect predicts the individual's performance level, whether he or she will be persistent or surrender all efforts (Barkley, 2006). High efficacy teachers confront educational challenges and willingly experiment with newly developed teaching strategies while low efficacy teachers view strategies, such as differentiation, as an unmanageable challenge. Overall, teachers of high efficacy spend more time monitoring their students overall and are able to maintain student engagement in artful ways whereas low efficacious teachers tend to seek out *reliable* students to answer, allow outbursts, or even answer themselves, all to avoid the *uncertain* or *incorrect* answers. This behavior further depletes the confidence, engagement, and risk taking efforts of students who may be unsure of themselves. Over time, these unsure students concede all efforts to engage in learning and resort to disruptive behavior. Often, low efficacious teachers label these students as *difficult* and pursue outside assistance, such as Special Education, rather than believe that they are able to meet the child's needs inside the classroom; this is a belief common to high efficacy teachers.

Podell and Soodak (1993, as cited in Tucker et al., 2005) conducted a study to examine whether the perception of low efficacy teachers in regard to the referral and placement of students of low socioeconomic family status (SES) in a general education classroom was inappropriate. Teachers who were high in efficacy did not discriminate against students by SES; generally, they retained the students in their classroom.

Behaviors Common to High Efficacy Teachers

According to Ross and Bruce (2007) the traits and behaviors common to highly efficacious teachers are noted as: (a) high goal selection, (b) high exertion of effort, (c) persistence, (d) high student achievement, (e) improved instructional practice, (f) willing implementation of innovative teaching ideas, (g) mutual classroom control with students, (h) stimulation of student autonomy, (i) close monitor of lower ability students, (j) improvement of student self-concept, (k) motivation triggered even by failure, (l) acceptance of personal responsibility for successes and failures, (m) resourceful, (n) self-reflective, and (o) victorious over external challenges. These teachers are driven by a *do whatever it takes* mentality and are noted for their enthusiasm and commitment to teaching. Their optimistic perception trickles down to their students and establishes a direct link to student performance (Yost, 2002).

Students of high efficacy teachers receive more than simply a positive outlook, they perceive that their teacher truly cares about them (Collier, 2005). Caring teachers send value messages continuously through: (a) eye contact; (b) engaged listening; and (c) recognition of ideas, activities, and experiences that make each student feel unique. They form bonds of trust with their students which, in turn, guides instruction and discipline; this creates a genuine community of care where students not only feel connected to their teacher, but to each other. In a caring environment, students embrace and carry out their teachers' same attitudes and behaviors with their classmates.

A positive self-concept is further enriched by the teacher's attempt to establish a Relational Dyad: (a) protection of child's life, (b) nurtured child growth, and (c) moral development (Collier, 2005). As students observe actions of sincere interest and concern

from their teacher, they learn to care deeply for themselves and others. The end result of this established learning community is increased efficacy to the teacher, which later solidifies teacher commitment and improves job performance. This reciprocal fuel, simply caring for all students, is a necessary ingredient of a potent teaching force.

Behaviors Common to Low Efficacious Teachers

Teachers with low efficacy attribute failures and even successes to external factors, which they believe are greater than themselves (Ware & Kitsantas, 2007). As challenges occur, low efficacy teachers blame students for their inadequacies and set low expectations for students who may not immediately or intrinsically arise to meet the academic standard. Ross and Bruce (2007) stated that, “lower-efficacy teachers concentrate their efforts on the upper ability group, giving less attention to lower ability students who the teachers view as potential sources of disruption” (p.51).

Due to their negative outlook, low efficacy teachers cope unsuccessfully with the daily classroom challenges which they redefine as and perceive as *threats* as noted by Bandura (1997, as cited in Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). Stressors such as: (a) student behavior, (b) problematic parent/teacher relationships, (c) conflict with colleagues, and (d) implementation of new programs increase the level of emotional unrest these teachers experience, which later contributes to their burnout. With heightened levels of burnout, the endpoint of a period of unsuccessful coping with these stressors, the teacher becomes alienated and loses his or her firm grasp upon original aspirations and goals identified at the beginning of the academic year or even their career.

Teachers of low efficacy perceive that external factors, such as SES, are not only beyond their control, but stifle any efforts they make in the classroom (Auwarter, 2008).

Their attempts to improve student achievement become stagnant, and their outcome expectancies vary greatly. The researchers of the Auwarter study presented teachers with scenarios of hypothetical students, who were of low SES and high SES. The teachers predicted limited and dreary futures for the students portrayed as low SES in comparison to students depicted to be of high SES. In the context of gender, they judged low SES females more favorably than high SES females and high SES males to outperform low SES males.

With the perception that SES is a predictor of student achievement, low efficacy teachers feel even less effective when they work with students of low SES (Auwarter, 2008). This leads to fewer efforts in the classroom on behalf of the teacher which, in turn, fuel the cycle of low student achievement. Warren (2002, as cited in Auwarter) reported that 75% of teachers in low income schools demonstrate signs of low teacher efficacy. These findings indicate that students of low SES, especially boys, are susceptible to the negative effects related to low teacher expectations.

Collective Teacher Efficacy

Klem and Connell (2004) stated that “the most potent predictor of student outcomes difference was teachers’ collective responsibility. . . [which] promoted student engagement and learning” (p. 271). Collective efficacy is characteristic of a faculty team that takes responsibility for student learning. Individual members believe in the ability of the members of the organization to accomplish set goals even as they pursue attainment of their own goals, which align with the organization. School staff teams with high levels of perceived efficacy set challenging and worthwhile goals in which they exert relentless efforts to meet these goals.

Schools are characterized as learning communities when each individual member and the organization as a whole: (a) sets goals, (b) chooses varied learning activities, (c) facilitates rather than dictates student learning, (d) respects and embraces different member roles, (e) respects differences, (f) shares resources and learning processes, (g) develops in-depth knowledge of ideas, and (h) provides feedback (Ware & Kitsantas, 2007). Teacher retention is higher in these learning environments due to teachers' belief that the feedback they can contribute is welcome and used to impact decisions made in their schools.

Student Achievement

Student success, directly (this is a part of the strength of the research) linked to teacher efficacy, requires certain conditions such as: (a) high standards; (b) meaningful and engaging curriculum; (c) professional learning communities; (d) personalized learning environments; and above all else, (e) support from both teachers and administrators (Klem & Connell, 2004). From the perspective of students, they must sense that: (a) their teachers care, (b) they are free to make their own decisions, (c) they are provided with relevant work, (d) the expectations are appropriate, and (e) the consequences are fair and predictable. If the students perceive that they are participants in a caring learning environment, they are more likely to be engaged in school. Higher levels of engagement produce increased attendance and higher test scores. This demonstrates the link of teacher efficacy to student achievement on standardized tests (Barkley, 2006). With increased student engagement, students are more likely to complete school and pursue postsecondary education which will better ensure their economic independence.

When students are provided with real world learning experiences, they find meaning in what they do, a foundational principle of student engagement (Klem & Connell, 2004). Learning efforts continue as students: (a) pay more attention, (b) show more interest, (c) are more persistent, and (d) thereby receive even more teacher support. Teacher support, in the form of positive feedback, intensifies the experience of the student within the learning environment which empowers them to become better learners. They hunger for challenging tasks that sharpen the skills of strategic thought and experimentation. These high expectations, in combination with a personalized learning environment, are powerful mediators of high student achievement.

Leadership and Efficacy

Committed teacher effort is “affected by the type of leadership that administrators exhibit” (Ware & Kitsantas, 2007, p. 304). Principals who choose to utilize the transformational leadership style are able to establish environments in which teachers feel satisfied with the leader/teacher relationship and are willing to invest more time, effort, and commitment to the success of the entire school and community (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999, as cited in Ross & Gray, 2006). Under transformational leadership, principals have the power to influence the beliefs of the staff in relation to student achievement. In such schools, teacher commitment to mission, goals, values, and community is driven by high teacher efficacy, which results in increased student achievement.

Bass (1985), Bass and Avolio (1994), Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, and Getter (1990, all cited in Ross & Gray, 2006) indicated that, of the many different styles of leadership available for principals to adopt, the transformational style has the most

powerful effect on the members of a learning community. Under transformational leadership, there is an individual and compelling commitment to nurture the growth of group members in the attainment of their goals, which thereby increases their personal investment to the organization. Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach (1999, as cited in Ross & Gray) reviewed 20 studies in which leadership was linked to teacher outcomes. Overall, the reviewers found that use of the transformational leadership style established an environment where the teachers were more willing to exercise greater effort and change classroom practices or attitudes.

High teacher efficacy is linked to openness to change and its accompanying challenges (Ross & Gray, 2006). Generally, teachers who believe strongly in their ability to bring about student learning, have higher expectations which, in turn, produce higher student achievement. Collective teacher efficacy is related to the perceptions of the teaching faculty to increase student achievement. Similar to the relationship of individual teacher efficacy on student achievement, schools with higher collective teacher efficacy have higher student achievement. Ross and Gray (2006) linked teacher efficacy to principal behavior. Principals influence the interpretation and implication of student achievement by their definition of what represents success. Under transformational leadership, principals look for opportunities to build teacher efficacy through inspirational messages in order to confront the low expectations of staff and students.

In professional learning communities, which emerge from the use of transformational leadership, it is predicted that there will be higher teacher efficacy with higher commitment to: (a) school mission, (b) higher parental involvement and, (c) contribution of effort to the community (Ross & Gray, 2006). Within this environment,

teachers are sufficiently confident about their abilities to invite colleagues to help them problem solve areas of needed personal growth. In these collaborative efforts, they can develop new teaching strategies, which further teacher effectiveness and, thereby, increase teacher efficacy. Chester and Beaudoin (1996) and Looney and Wentzel (2004, both cited in Ross & Gray) proposed a direct relationship between teacher belief and teacher commitment; any boost to teacher belief raises teacher commitment.

Apart from the support systems that a transformational leader works to establish, he or she must actively and personally invest in the professional growth of each teacher (Ebmeier, 2003). Mediators, which strengthen teacher efficacy, are identified as: (a) timely and continual feedback, (b) encouragement, (c) emotional support, (d) reinforcement, (e) availability of modeled experiences, (f) classroom visits and observations, (g) assistance in goal selection, and (h) rewards and recognition. All of these mediators, when adopted by effective leaders, communicate genuine interest and support to teachers. The implications of the Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2007) study were that teacher competence is further fortified through whole staff development rather than the development of a few who then report to the organization. Also, leaders should eliminate the use of prepackaged or predesigned programs that extinguish teacher creativity and, therefore, teacher efficacy.

The reciprocal effects of strong transformational leadership have been found to increase more confidence and respect for the leader (Ebmeier, 2003). In addition, teachers experience: (a) greater job satisfaction, (c) increased commitment, (c) improved instruction, (d) supportive professional relationships, and (e) increased teacher efficacy, all of which all lead to teacher retention.

Efforts to Increase Teacher Efficacy

Each year about 20% of U.S. teachers abandon their post as a result of lost purpose and enthusiasm (Slick, 2002). In this era, when educational accountability in the form of standardized testing is politically driven, teachers must be supported in their efforts to combat the everyday stressors that decrease self-efficacy. No longer should discussion be centralized solely on the recruitment of good teachers, but it should be expanded toward the retention of quality teachers. Under current initiatives, teachers are required to meet the needs of every child. Therefore, teachers need opportunities to grow professionally as they seek to rise to the challenges with which they are confronted.

According to Ross (2007), the provision of professional development (PD) influences teacher efficacy, improves instruction, and student achievement. Through PD, teachers are provided opportunities to: (a) become experts of research and reflection, (b) contribute ideas as learners as well as be recognized for them, and (c) practice and implement innovative techniques. Researchers with the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL; as cited in Slick, 2002) deemed professional development was essential to school reform. They stated, “Teachers will require more than 20 percent of their work time for learning and collaboration if they are to be successful in implementing ambitious reform initiatives” (p. 200). In effective schools, teachers and leaders have formed an alliance in the establishment of these professional learning communities where teachers have ongoing opportunities to work within a network of support systems. Slick reported that these communities have become essential for teachers to not only grow and learn, but to be rejuvenated and valued as professionals.

Renewed veteran teachers of a two year graduate program described the support they received during participation in a learning community as the following: (a) time to learn and work independently and cooperatively, (b) an atmosphere that cultivated professional talk, (c) autonomy and the affirmation of personal and professional voices, (d) opportunities to grow professionally and successfully, (e) a sense of community with the exchange of ideas and collaboration, and (f) social and professional activities that uplifted and inspired individuals (Slick, 2002). Under these conditions, teacher efficacy is strengthened and enhanced.

Strategic participation in PD aids in the reduction of teacher perception of difficulty related to instructional tasks and increases personal beliefs in the ability to teach new techniques (Ross & Bruce, 2007). This increase in teacher efficacy was experienced by a group of teachers who were asked to implement a standards based mathematics program as part of a study Ross and Bruce led to investigate the effects of on teacher efficacy. At the beginning, due to a deficiency of mastery of experiences with the new program and its techniques, participant teachers lacked confidence in the classroom. However, with the appropriate PD structures in place, their confidence grew and lower ability student achievement was reported to match if not exceed previous results. Ross and Bruce provided teachers with opportunities to: (a) actively learn, (b) observe classroom examples, (c) participate in collaborative activities, (d) receive feedback, (e) focus on content, and (f) redefine success.

With the multiplication of mastery of experiences, the most potent source of teacher efficacy, teachers began to develop new philosophies of practice in their classrooms (Ross & Bruce, 2007). These researchers noted that teachers: (a) engaged

their students in rich learning opportunities, (b) modeled learning goals, (c) provided explorations that perhaps exceeded their own expertise, and (d) transferred responsibility of learning to students. With the implementation of these enhanced classroom management skills, Ross and Bruce demonstrated that PD impacts teacher efficacy, which then contributes to more effective instruction and improved student achievement.

Teacher Ownership to Increase Personal Efficacy

With such an expanse of personal investment in their own career paths, teachers should take advantage of the offered benefits of personal learning communities (PLC) to develop themselves professionally (Slick, 2002). They should: (a) pursue positive people such as a mentor, (b) avoid negative energy, (c) be brave and take chances, (d) assist in the establishment of a community, and (d) function according to its norms. In addition to the professional growth that teachers experience through involvement in PLCs, their career outlook becomes positive, and they are simply happier. The systems within the PLC allow them to obtain confidence in their abilities and the courage to interact with colleagues and administrators in more effective and authentic methods.

Lee (2002) elaborated that one New York City teacher, Cockerham, attributed her personal success with her students to the support she received, over time, from: (a) principals, (b) peer teachers, (c) parents, and (d) the students themselves. Cockerham reported the impact her principal made through the principal's involvement in the instructional program and verbal feedback Cockerham's proactive interactions between colleagues, administration, students and parents within the "team concept . . . made the difference in her confidence as a teacher" (p. 83). She continued to open her self up to peer feedback and even probed her students for input in the form of a letter. Students

sincerely shared what they did and did not like from being in her class. It was apparent that Cockerham was not threatened by feedback even from parents who mostly reported their satisfaction with her efforts in the classroom with their children.

Teacher Efficacy to Reach Culturally Diverse Students

Many teachers admitted inadequacies in their efforts to teach students from diverse backgrounds, which aids in the explanation of the current achievement gap (Tucker et al., 2005). The insecurities reported by inservice teachers provided evidence for the necessity of structured teacher training programs to boost teacher efficacy. Workshop participants in a recent study based on Tucker's Self-Empowerment Theory (SET) reported a noteworthy increase in knowledge about the learners they encountered every day in their schools (Tucker et al.). The goals of the training program were to equip teachers with strategies to: (a) empower students to meet challenges, (b) teach students to self-assert, (c) teach parents to self-assert, (d) help students regulate feelings, and (e) provide culturally responsive solutions. The use of these strategies, appropriate for all students but specifically tailored to meet the challenges faced by low income African American children, presented possible student outcomes such as: (a) effective study methods, (b) strategies for self-motivation, (c) effective communication skills, (d) successful behaviors, (e) self-applied praise, and (f) adaptive skills. Utilization of intervention strategies such as those listed above, can better prepare students who confront the obstacles of: (a) poverty, (b) discrimination, and (c) racism daily.

An increase in knowledge to positively impact the achievement of students of color increased the efficacy of the teachers who attended the SET workshop (Tucker et al., 2005). The participants gathered that: (a) each student must be taught to achieve no

matter the underlying circumstances, (b) positive behavior messages should be visually displayed as reminders, (c) students must receive frequent praise upon demonstration of described behaviors, (d) unacceptable behaviors should be reviewed continually, (e) consequences should be consistent and predictable, and (f) teachers must spend more time to establish relationships with students. The leaders of the workshop emphasized the importance of verbal and nonverbal cultural sensitivity. Students should not receive the message that any culture is more highly valued over another from anyone in their classroom community, especially their teacher.

Another strategy to work effectively with students of color is the implementation of an advocate system to support parents and students (Klem & Connell, 2004). Parents and students who were involved in a Family Advocate System (FAS) attributed their success in school to the advocate who worked with their families over a period of two to three years. Also, the receipt of positive phone calls or notes and homework workshops targeted to parents helped to erase any doubts that the parents may have had. They felt better prepared to assist their children with homework without reservations.

The Responsibility of African American Teachers

Highly efficacious teachers, who work with children of color cultivate a caring environment that fortifies the unity and confidence of the students within their classroom communities to combat negative suppositions made about their student's capabilities (Ware, 2002). Collins (1991, as cited in Ware), a researcher of critical issues within the African American community, stated that black teachers adopt a unique method of caring when they work with African American students otherwise known as "lifting as we climb" (p. 35). Regardless of their students' race and SES, these teachers felt connected

to their students who greatly deserved their care and concern. In fact, this level of care is rooted in an old West African tradition termed, “other mothers” (p. 36). Historically, West African women nurtured the children of other women who cannot provide care to their own for whatever reason. Based on the need of the child, the other mother assumes the role of: (a) cheerleader, (b) mentor, (c) nurturer, (d) provider, and the like. Teachers who operate from this mentality no longer see their students as separate people, but rather, as an extension of their own family.

This familial relationship allows teachers to provide affection to children often deemed uneducable and labeled *at-risk* in many unsupportive school climates (Ware, 2002). This affectionate bond provides the framework for effective discipline and boundary definitions. In these classrooms, often, teacher/student conversations that revolve around discipline end with statements such as, “I’m your mama until you go back home, and when you go back home, you go to your other mother” (p. 36). Other conversations revolve around the realities that African American children face, such as: (a) gangs, (b) violence, (c) high drop out rates, (d) diminution of test scores, (e) low SES, and (f) single parent households. Due to their own experiences, African American teachers of African American students tend to be candid in class discussions as a preparation tool for what their students will soon face, especially in regard to racism. One of Foster’s teachers (1997, as cited in Ware) elaborated on the importance of the identification and decimation of racism:

There’s always been a lot of prejudice against black people. Today there is still a lot of prejudice and racism, and it’s gonna be here a long time . . . I try to teach my children that they can’t let that get in the way. We have to forget about those who try to keep us down, we have to protect ourselves, and we have to keep going on. (p. 38)

Teachers, who employ this *keep it moving* mentality develop resiliency in children who have been rejected and deemed unworthy of love and acceptance by society (Collier, 2005). Their teachers see themselves in the faces of their students and believe they are personally responsible for their students' success. African American teachers, who share and have shared the same plight of their students, can provide the requisite empathy without victimization concessions. They believe in the potential of their students and commented that "black kids are creative, inquisitive, and bright" (Tolliver, as cited in Ware, 2002, p. 39).

Instructional Practice in Efficacious Classrooms

Efficacious teachers recognize that it is important to establish strong and consistent classroom management early in the academic year (Ware, 2002). It is through this framework that students begin to manage their own behavior. Foundation principles for learning, such as values and character education, are instilled within students by teachers who promote: (a) respect for self and others, (b) kinship, and (c) personal values. With these principles in action, students can operate confidently within the constructs of a safe environment without fear of reprisal from classmates or humiliation due to unfair policies.

In regard to academics and curriculum, efficacious teachers take an active approach to instruction (Ware, 2002). Learning is experiential and connected to the outside world. After a bombardment of negative comments from her students about their community and school, Toliver, a New York City mathematics teacher, developed a lesson to help her students gain new perspective (Lee, 2002). The students were challenged to chart a route from the school through the community with the inclusion of

multiple real life mathematical problems one might encounter along the way. To culminate their learning experience, the students published books of their problems with illustrations and/or photographs as an added effect. Toliver's successful engagement with her students became apparent when one group of students made the following comment on one of the pages of the book, "the purpose of this experience is to prove that the classroom is NOT the only place to learn Math" (Ware, p. 43).

Toliver's (as cited in Ware, 2002) triumphant engagement with her students depicted another effective and recommended instructional approach of efficacious teachers, cooperative learning (Barkley, 2006). In cooperative learning environments, students work together rather than compete against each other. With the proper structures of a learning environment in place, students are presented with opportunities to feel successful which Schunk (1989, as cited in Barkley) noted leads to increased self-efficacy for students. With use of the cooperative learning constructs, the responsibility of learning is transferred to students, which then trains them to be more in control of their education.

Barkley (2006) concluded that teachers can have a great impact on their students' education with focused attention on their various learning styles and abilities. Learning styles should not be perceived as hindrances, but tools that provide a clear connection to the best method to successfully equip students. "Teaching in ways that connect with students . . . requires an understanding of differences that may arise from culture, family experiences, developed intelligences and approaches to learning (Darling-Hammond, 1998, p.7)" (Shore, 2004, p. 112). It is timely and appropriate to mention that this researcher understands that, although there are many approaches available to implement

differentiated instruction, for the purposes of this project, Multiple Intelligences (MI) has been chosen for discussion.

Gardner (1993, as cited in Shore, 2004), in his MI theory, proposed a need and approach to address the diverse ways people learn. The various intelligences are: (a) verbal/linguistic, (b) mathematical/logical, (c) interpersonal, (d) intrapersonal, (e) visual/spatial, (f) bodily/kinesthetic, (g) musical/rhythmic, and (h) naturalistic. Campbell and Campbell (1999, as cited in Shore) reported that the use of MI theory: (a) increased learning objectives, (b) led to gains on standardized tests, (c) reduced the achievement gap, (d) improved behavior, (e) aided in the inclusion of special needs students, (f) promoted parent involvement, (g) improved critical thinking and problem solving skills, and (h) cultivated a positive learning environment.

One English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher, involved in Shore's (2004) study of the relationship of MI (Gardner, 1993, as cited in Shore) to teacher efficacy, reported that her inservice teachers learned more quickly as a result of their engagement in MI based assignments to reinforce concepts. In this instance, the teacher experienced an increase in self-efficacy as a reciprocal effect of her actions. At the beginning of the course, the ESL teacher purposefully afforded students with opportunities to negotiate the syllabus and related activities. This student centered learning intention is the chosen approach of efficacious teachers. Another approach to instruction that demonstrated her high level of efficacy was to model and mediate the concept of MI rather than instruct it theoretically. Often, lessons executed by the instructor incorporated: (a) music, (b) role play, and (c) colorful visual representations.

Teachers in the Shore study reported that the instructional strategies rooted in MI (Gardner, 1993, as cited in Shore, 2004) promoted self-efficacy. Specifically, they gave testimony to sentiments of: (a) encouragement, (b) support, (c) connection, (d) purposeful engagement, (e) increased comprehension, and (f) enthusiasm for teaching and learning. Additionally, students felt empowered to take ownership of their learning as they engaged in meaningful content. One teacher stated, “I even feel I can learn better now, I feel the way I want my students to feel” (Shore, p. 129). At the end of the course, inservice teachers were well versed in their own learning profiles which were influenced by their: (a) backgrounds, (b) social and cultural experiences, and (c) preferred learning intelligences. The ESL instructor involved in the Shore study concluded that:

To learn, we must know about ourselves . . . patterns and structures of learning that are influenced by our backgrounds, our experience, our interests, and our culture, among other factors . . . then] the classroom learning community becomes more inclusive, creative, supportive and inspiring; more conducive to learning. (p. 122)

Teachers, who incorporate MI as an instructional strategy, are presented with a metamorphical learning experience, in which they transform (active vs. passive according to Dr. Sweet) inwardly and outwardly which, in turn, elicits greater teacher efficacy.

Chapter Summary

In order for the efforts of stakeholders in the U.S. educational system to overcome the turbulent state of low student achievement, low retention of quality teachers, and overall low global performance, they will need to pursue methods which support teachers who directly impact students more than anyone else in the educational arena. It is this researcher’s opinion that, in order to secure a highly efficacious workforce, teachers need to be renewed and developed throughout all phases of their career. Furthermore, teachers

must take ownership of their own professional development by continued review of researched based strategies and methods in addition to self-reflection upon their personal vision, mission, and attitudes toward the students with whom they interact. They must adopt a do whatever it takes mentality. In the words of Mizell (as cited in Lee, 2002):

If teachers and administrators and schools want students to succeed, they have to believe that all students can and should succeed. More importantly, they have to act to make it happen, they have to do almost anything to make it happen. The practices for student success are not a mystery; they are well known. They are not, however, self-implementing. (p. 67)

In Chapter 3, this researcher describes the method, target audience, goals, and procedures for the development of this project.

Chapter 3

METHOD

The purpose of this project was to design a Power Point presentation for teachers and administrators to use as a foundational tool to aid in the discussion of teacher efficacy. The reality of the state of belief of the U.S. teaching workforce surfaced as a great concern to this researcher as she observed frustrations and doubts rise among many of the teachers she encountered, read about, or about whom the media reported. As the study began, many issues emerged. Each year preservice teachers, high in enthusiasm, launch themselves into a widely respected career with aspirations to impact student achievement only later to find themselves discouraged, dissatisfied, and exhausted due to lack of support in the implementation of standards based curriculum and assessment. Inservice teachers are no different in their personal investment and resulted experience. With this information, this researcher acknowledged the need for the support and professional development of preservice and inservice teachers alike in their efforts to reach each and every student.

Target Audience

This project was designed for application to teachers and administrators who work with students from diverse backgrounds who may or may not be highly impacted by low socioeconomic status. However, its content was applicable to any teacher who works with any population or grade level, and especially for teachers who desired to revive lost fervor for teaching.

Also, teachers who seek to sustain and increase their current enthusiasm for teaching, teacher leaders and administrators who aspire to influence and ignite a school staff team to positively impact an entire community will be interested in this project.

Goals and Procedures

The goal of this project was to provide teachers and administrators with concrete strategies to: (a) identify levels of efficacy on an individual and collective basis, (b) exemplify behaviors of highly efficacious teachers, and (c) implement strategies to increase levels of efficacy. The PowerPoint presentation provided the groundwork and framework for enriched discussion in regard to teacher efficacy. It included opportunities for group discussion and personal reflection. Additionally, a list of authors and published works was provided for those who would like to further research the topic of teacher efficacy.

Peer Assessment

Assessment of the power point presentation was obtained from five colleagues through informal feedback, recommendations, and suggestions for further research. Each colleague was provided with a copy of the presentation and asked to review it for appropriateness, relevancy, and projected impact. Each reviewer provided comments, editing marks, and suggestions on the hard copy.

Chapter Summary

The need for school reform has reached the top of priority lists for teachers, administrators, parents, leaders of educational preparatory programs and policy makers today. Through this project, this researcher used information acquired from an extensive

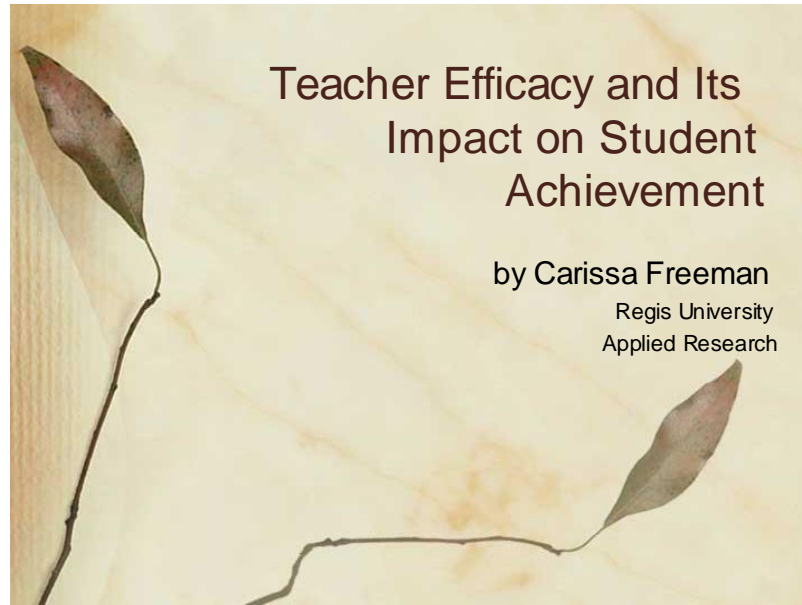
review of literature to provide teachers with methodologies and powerful strategies to improve teacher efficacy and thereby increase student achievement. In Chapter 4, she provided an illustrative power point presentation to stimulate discussion on best practices for teachers who work with a variety of students from a variety of backgrounds. Discussion and colleague reviews were presented in Chapter 5.

Chapter 4

RESULTS


Across the U.S. school reform is a top priority on the minds of educators, administrators, parents and policy makers. As a result of low student achievement, teachers, their qualifications and classroom practices have come under careful examination. Preservice teachers enter the profession with high hopes of making an impact on students, while inservice teachers work to maintain or regain lost enthusiasm for their career and their ability to make a difference in the lives of students. Teacher efficacy, the belief and expectation that one has the talent and abilities to bring about student learning, is directly linked to student achievement (Tucker et al. 2005). The goal of this presentation was to inform teachers and administrators of the importance of building support systems to help build up efficacy levels of teachers so that student achievement would be positively impacted. This author is hopeful that educators and administrators would carefully review the philosophies and methodologies presented in order to take responsible steps toward increasing efficacy levels of teachers in the classroom and therefore positively impact student achievement.

After the presentation, this author asked those who reviewed the presentation to complete a short survey. A copy of that survey is in the Appendix.



Teacher Efficacy and Its Impact on Student Achievement.

I am curious as to what you, the audience, already know regarding Efficacy or Teacher Efficacy. (The presenter will provide time for audience feedback.) How has this knowledge impacted the way that you teach, observe other teachers, or view education today? (The presenter will provide time for audience participation.) Well, let's continue this discussion through the presentation that I have prepared for you today.




Teacher Efficacy

É is the expectation that one possesses the talent and abilities to bring about student learning

- core of school reform
- directly linked to student achievement (Tucker et al. 2005)
- determines motivational levels of teacher:
 - 1) performance
 - 2) commitment
 - 3) retention

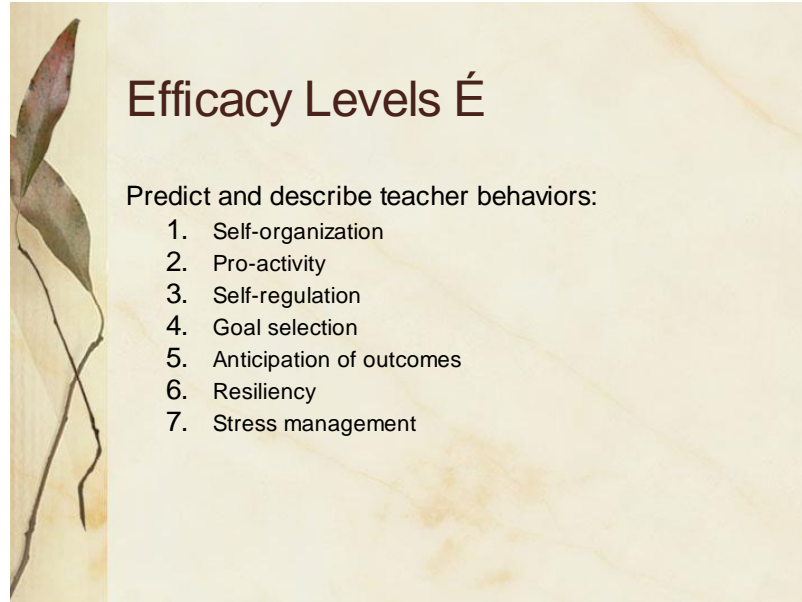
Efficacy, in general, is the belief that one can achieve a specific goal or task. In relation to teaching, it is the core to school reform. School reform is a hot topic among stakeholders in education today. With reason, student achievement is not only linked to teachers, but their levels of efficacy. Like a cause and effect relationship, the higher the level of efficacy, the higher the performance, commitment and likelihood for retention of the teacher. The lower the level of efficacy, the lower the performance, commitment and unlikelihood for teacher retention.



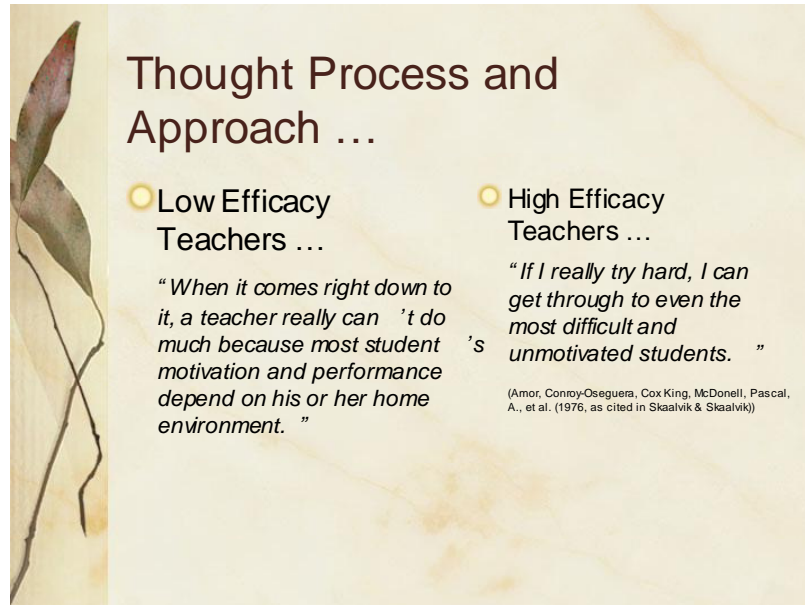
Efficacy, an individual's sense of competence to complete a task or attain a goal, develops over time. Bandura (1977, as cited in Lee, 2002)

- **Mastery of experience** -
previous results and accomplishments
- **Verbal Persuasion**
- positive or negative feedback
- **Vicarious experiences**
- observe colleagues' success
- **Physiological State**
- felt emotions stimulated by memory and repeated situations

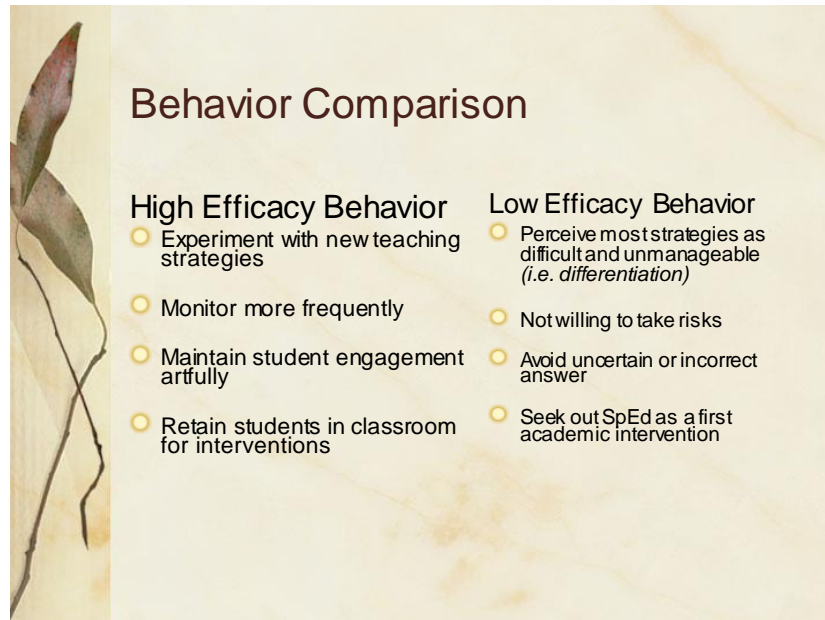
Based on an individual's interpretation of information from the following resources: mastery of experience (belief based on previous successful experiences), verbal persuasion (positive or negative feedback provided by external sources like a principal, coach or colleague), vicarious experiences (belief built upon the success of others that are admired or respected), and physiological states (emotions triggered by a memory or repeated situations), an individual will determine what type of outcome they expect to have in relation to completing a specific task or achieving a certain goal. The most common resource used is *Mastery of Experience*.



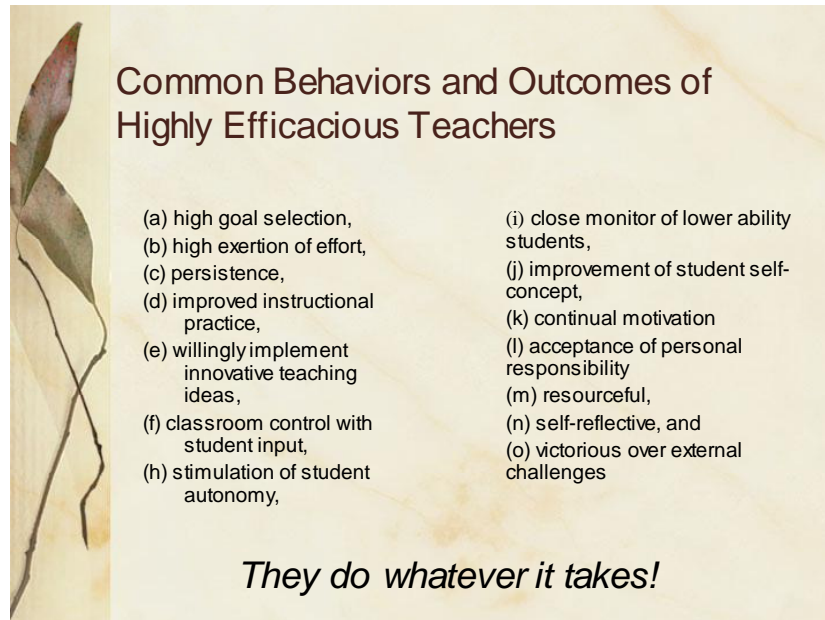
An individual's level of efficacy will predict and describe the following teacher behaviors: self-organization, pro-activity, self-regulation, goal selection, and anticipation of outcomes, resiliency, and stress management.



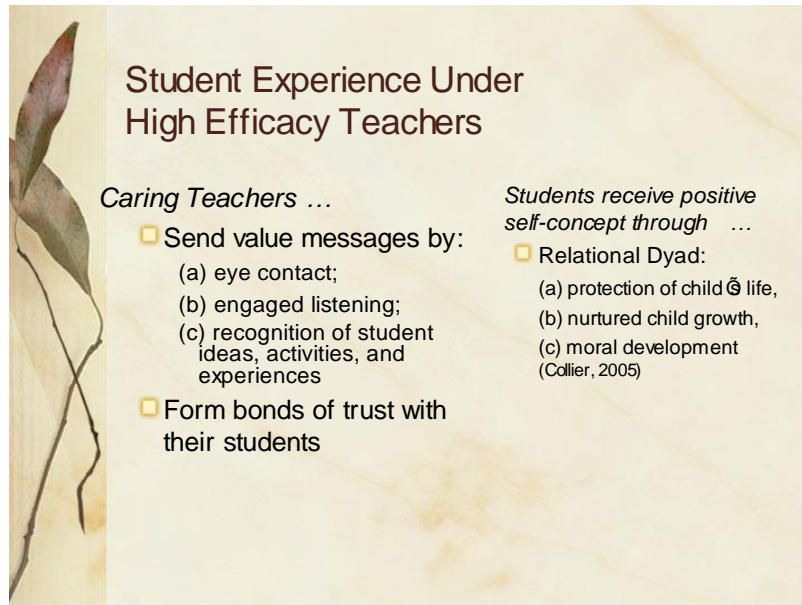
The starting point marking the differences between high efficacy teachers and low efficacy teachers begins with their thought process or perspective. Teachers of low efficacy believe at their core that “When it comes right down to it, a teacher really can’t do much because most student’s motivation and performance depend on his or her home environment.” In direct contrast, teachers of low efficacy believe that “If I really try hard, I can get through to even the most difficult and unmotivated students.”



The differences between the two levels of belief can be easily compared through observance of their behavior. Characteristic teacher behavior related to teachers of high efficacy is a willingness to experiment with new teacher strategies, strategic and frequent monitoring of student progress, an artful engagement of students, and a desire to retain students in the classroom rather than send them to out of the classroom to receive interventions. Teacher behaviors common to low efficacy teachers are perceptions that most strategies are difficult and manageable (*i.e. differentiation*), unwillingness to take risks, an avoidance to call on the student who may provide the uncertain or incorrect answer, or the pursuit of Special Education services as the first academic intervention. Overall, the behavior of a high efficacy teacher is bold and active, while the behavior of a low efficacy is stagnant and withdrawn.

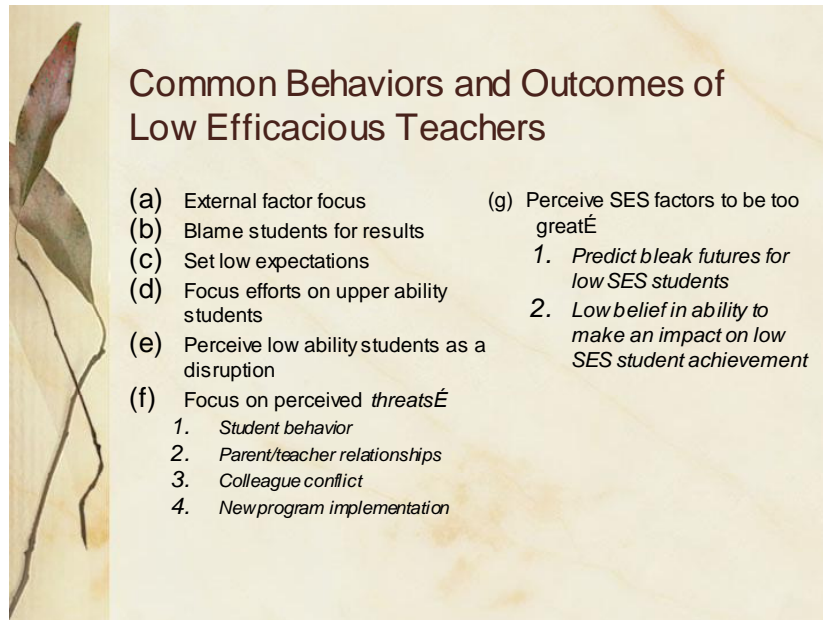


Highly efficacious teachers are busy! Due to their high belief in their ability to impact student learning, they are continually looking for strategies to help their students achieve more. There appears to be a seemingly endless list of behaviors highly efficacious teachers are willing to adopt in order provide successful experiences to their students. They have: (a) high goal selection, (b) high exertion of effort, (c) persistence, (d) high student achievement, (e) improved instructional practice, (f) willing implementation of innovative teaching ideas, (g) mutual classroom control with students, (h) stimulation of student autonomy, (i) close monitor of lower ability students, (j) improvement of student self-concept, (k) motivation triggered even by failure, (l) acceptance of personal responsibility for successes and failures, (m) resourceful, (n) self-reflective, and (o) victorious over external challenges. Which of these behaviors do you recognize in your colleagues? Which behaviors do you recognize in some of your teachers from your own educational experience? Which behaviors would describe your teaching practices and approaches?

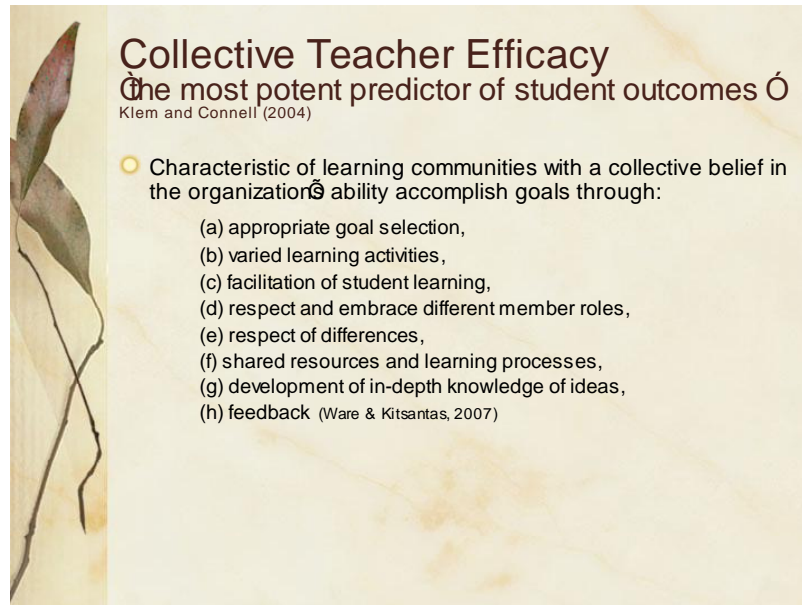


High efficacy teachers look for opportunities to build relationships with their students both naturally and strategically. Students feel safe, protected and trust the guidance of their “caring” teachers. Teachers who demonstrate this kind of nurturing or caring attitude send value messages by giving and insisting on eye contact. When students come to speak to them they send the message that they are engaged listeners and are fully present with the child. They look for opportunities to recognize student ideas, out of school activities and experiences. High efficacy teachers use these methods to send “caring” messages to their students that aids in building bonds of trust with their students.


As a result of this style of “caring”, students build a strong sense of self-concept. Caring teachers take responsibility for the protection of the child’s life, seek to nurture the child’s growth, and oversee the child’s moral development. In essence, they are developing the “whole” child.



Unfortunately, teachers of low efficacy focus more on external factors and believe that there is very little that they can control in their efforts to impact student achievement. They are consumed by external factors such as economic status. Low efficacy teachers blame students for poor achievement. Since they set low behavior and academic expectations, they tend to focus their efforts on the upper ability students. Lower ability students are perceived as disruptions. Overall, these attitudes and behaviors cause considerable and continual conflict with their students, colleagues, parents and even internal conflict with self. In addition, low efficacy teachers believe that SES factors are too great for the students to overcome and therefore predict bleak futures for their students. Finally, they believe very little in their own ability to impact student achievement.



The level of belief of the entire faculty to impact student achievement defines Collective Teacher Efficacy. It is the “most potent predictor of student outcomes.” The following behaviors would be characteristic of a staff team that is supportive of each other and solid in their knowledge of vision, mission and values. They: (a) set appropriate goals, (b) choose varied learning activities, (c) facilitate rather than dictate student learning, (d) respect and embrace different member roles, (e) respect differences, (f) share resources and learning processes, (g) develop in-depth knowledge of ideas, and (f) provide feedback.



Student Achievement

- Student success is directly linked to teacher efficacy and requires certain conditions:
 1. high standards;
 2. meaningful and engaging curriculum;
 3. professional learning communities;
 4. personalized learning environments;
 5. support from both teachers and administrators (Klem & Connell, 2004)


With the understanding that highly efficacious teachers and staff teams have the greatest success in impacting student achievement, it is important to note the constructs that create this positive learning environment: (a) high standards; (b) meaningful and engaging curriculum; (c) professional learning communities; (d) personalized learning environments; and above all else, (e) support from both teachers and administrators.



More on Student Achievement ...

- Real world learning experiences produce higher student engagement (Klem & Connell, 2004)
Students:
 1. pay more attention,
 2. show more interest,
 3. are more persistent,
 4. reciprocally receive even more teacher support
- Mediators of high student achievement
 - 1. Positive teacher feedback
 - 2. Provision of strategic and challenging tasks
 - 3. Experimentation
 - 4. Personalized learning environment

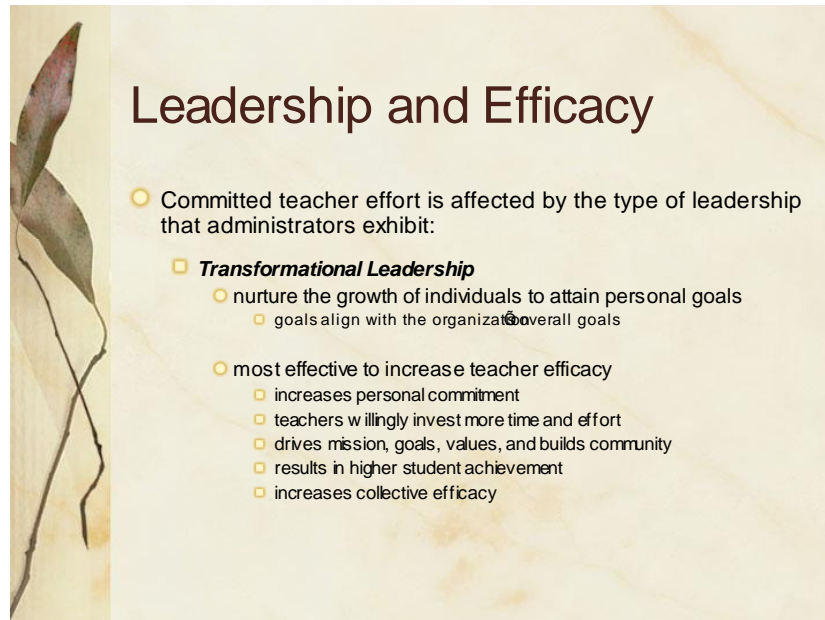
Students want to know that what they are learning in the classroom can be directly and immediately applied to the real world. In fact, it is for their own success and even survival that lessons be relevant to their own lives. Students pay more attention, show more interest, and are more persistent in their efforts toward learning. A reciprocal relationship is developed between students and teachers. As engagement increases teachers desire to provide even more support. This requires teachers to truly know their students personally, their interests, and be willing to take risks during instruction. The mediators of high student achievement are positive teacher feedback, strategic and challenging tasks, experimentation of new ideas, personalizing the learning environment.



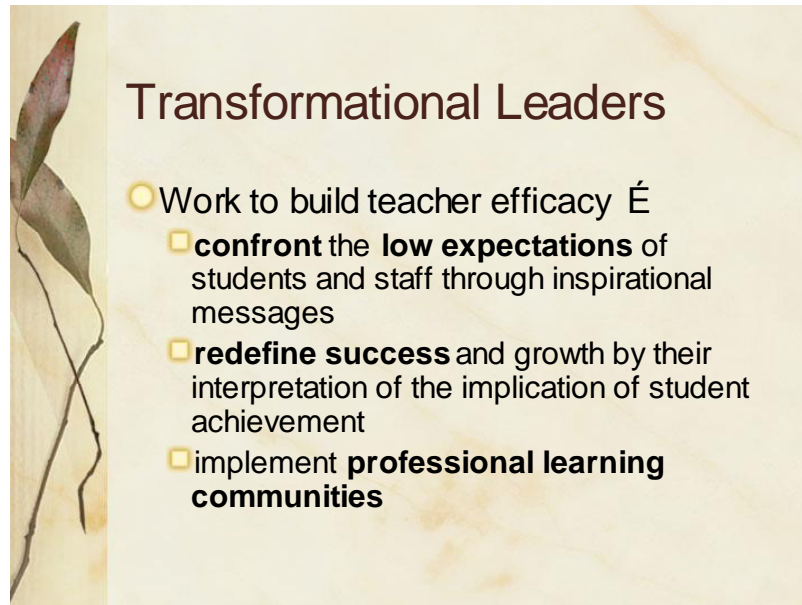
Student Perception Affect

- Student engagement in school is rooted in their perception that:
 1. teachers care,
 2. they are free to make own decisions,
 3. they are provided with relevant work,
 4. expectations are appropriate,
 5. the consequences are fair and predictable
- Result of student perception of participation in a *Caring Community*
 1. Higher levels of engagement
 2. Increased test scores
 3. Higher graduation rate
 4. Increased number of students pursuing postsecondary education

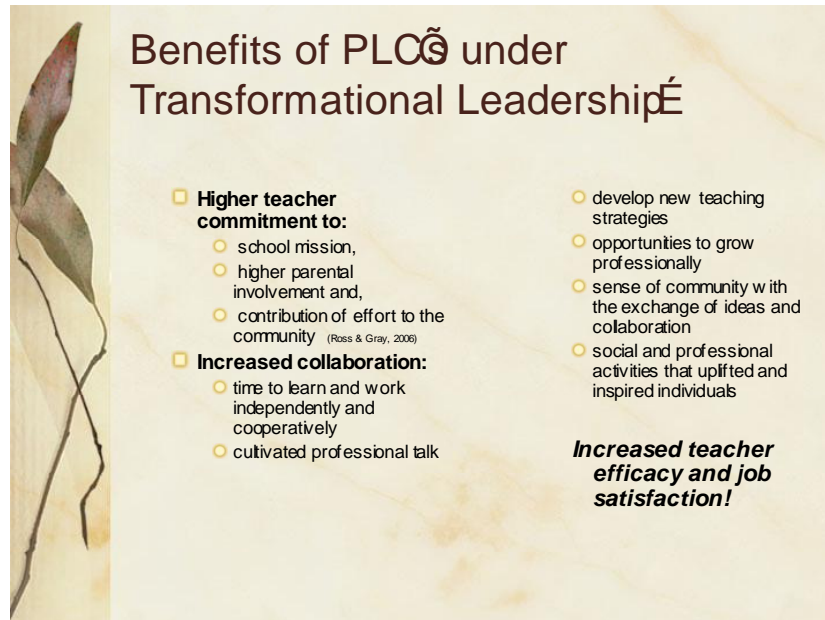
Student engagement in school is rooted in the perception students have that their teachers care for them. They also need to feel as though they have freedom of choice in their learning. The work that students are assigned must be relevant. Expectations should be fair and appropriate. Finally, students need to know that their learning experience will be predictable and fair. When students know what to expect, they feel safe and are able to operate responsibly with new freedoms. As the students feel safer, a community is created that naturally provides the encouragement and resources necessary to help students attain goals. They are more engaged in their learning, test scores increase. Students begin to believe in their ability to pursue postsecondary education and successful and meaningful careers.




Administrators have the power to indirectly impact student achievement through the type of leadership they demonstrate toward their faculty. Transformational leadership is one of the most successful leadership styles due to its focus on the growth of the individual within the community to attain their own personal goals. This personalized approach is successful for the organization as a whole since the goals that the leaders seek to support typically align with the organization's goals. Once teachers note that their administrator is committed to not only the organization, but each teacher's own professional growth, their level of commitment and passion for the organization as a whole increases. They are more willing to invest more time and effort to help the organization pursue its vision and achieve its mission. As a result, the collective efficacy of the faculty increases.



Transformational leaders understand the importance of surfacing the belief of the staff, students and community. Their next step is to strategically work to increase the level of expectations of staff, students and parents while looking for opportunities to positively measure growth based their unique understanding of the community and its history. As leaders redefine “success” for the community, teacher’s efficacy increases because they are able to see progress and even celebrate successes. By looking within the faculty for professional development, a message of belief of competence is communicated to the staff, which thereby increases individual and collective teacher efficacy.



The benefits of PLC's are seemingly endless. Teachers become more committed to the school. This renewed teacher commitment causes parents to see a positive impact on the community and culture within the building, and therefore, become more involved. Collaboration, a key component of PLC's, offers teachers opportunities to converse in professional settings regarding new and effective teaching strategies. Through these collaborative structures, trust is developed, which builds a sense of community where ideas can be shared freely. As the trust within the community expands, professional bonds expand to social bonds. Little by little individuals feel uplifted, inspired and invest a greater commitment to the students, staff and community. Schools with high teacher commitment will inevitably have high student achievement and greater job satisfaction.




Efforts to Increase Teacher Efficacy

Professional development (PD) influences teacher efficacy, improves instruction, and therefore, student achievement. It provides opportunities for teachers to:

- become experts of research and reflection,
- contribute ideas as learners as well as be recognized for them, and
- practice and implement innovative techniques

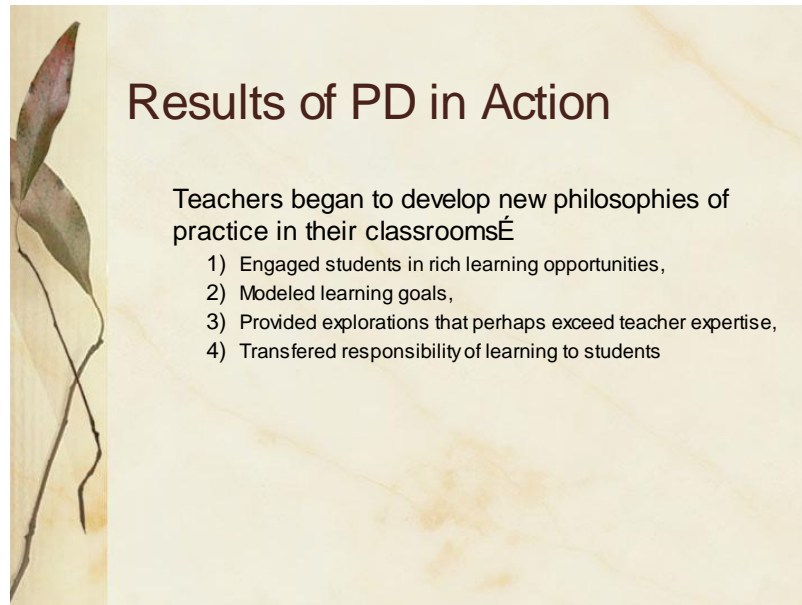
Professional development is a type of greenhouse that fosters professional growth and improved instruction. Teachers feel more confident in their ability to deliver effective and meaningful instruction. As teacher's *mastery of experience* increases, they feel empowered to aid their colleagues in their own discovery of innovative instructional strategies and techniques. They become experts of research and reflection, contribute ideas as learners, and practice and implement innovative techniques. Leaders who not only provide opportunities for their teachers to participate in effective PD, but recognize teachers who take the next steps in increasing their knowledge and skill can further solidify these teacher's efficacy through recognition and providing forums to share newly acquired knowledge and experiences.



Professional Development in Action


- A group of teachers were asked to implement a standards based mathematics program as part of a study conducted by Ross & Bruce (2007).
Teachers were provided opportunities to:
 - 1) actively learn,
 - 2) observe classroom examples,
 - 3) participate in collaborative activities,
 - 4) receive feedback,
 - 5) focus on content,
 - 6) redefine success

A group of teachers were asked to implement a standards based mathematics program as part of a study conducted by Ross and Bruce (2007). The participants were provided opportunities to: (a) actively learn, (b) observe classroom examples, (c) participate in collaborative activities, (d) receive feedback, (e) focus on content, (f) focus on content, (g) redefine success.



Through the strategic participation in professional development, teachers redefined their own philosophies of instruction in their own classrooms. Specifically they: (a) engaged students in rich learning opportunities, (b) modeled learning goals, (c) provided explorations that perhaps exceed teacher expertise, and (d) transferred responsibility of learning to students.

Teachers allowed learning to happen in unexpected places by stepping back and allowing the students to share their own learning experience. The students were acknowledged and valued for their own discoveries, even if it was unknown by the teacher. Students began to understand that teachers are not the only experts in the classrooms.




Teacher Ownership to Increase Efficacy

Teachers must take responsibility to develop themselves professionally through the benefits offered by PLCs

- 1) Pursue positive people such as a mentor,
- 2) Avoid negative energy,
- 3) Be brave and take chances,
- 4) Assist in the establishment of a community,
- 5) Function according to its norms

If the professional development is provided, then the excuse of inopportunity is removed. Being that teaching is a professional career, teachers must take advantage of opportunities to enrich their knowledge and experience as a professional. They must seek out others who may aid in their growth in positive ways. In addition, they should invite others along in their journey. Within PLC's teacher should: (a) pursue positive people and mentors, (b) avoid negative energy, (c) be brave and take chances, (d) assist in the establishment of a community, and (e) function according to its norms.



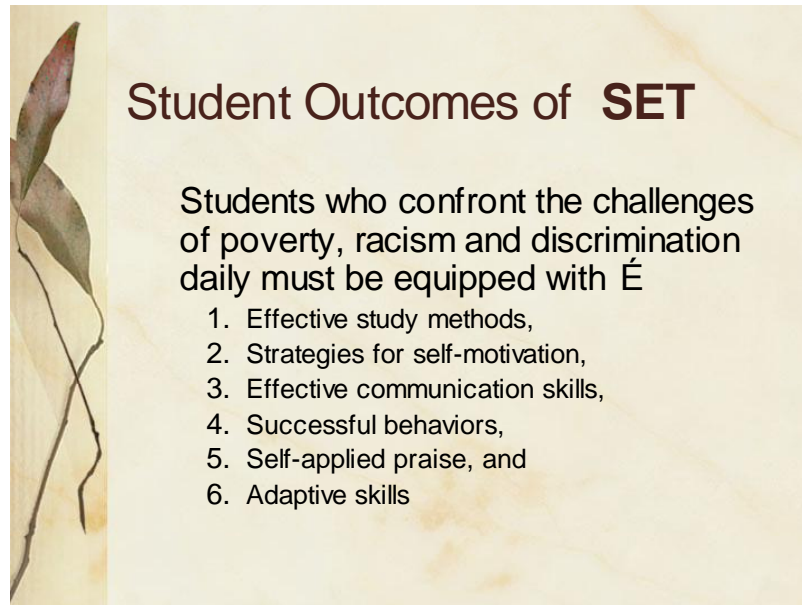
Teacher Efficacy to Reach Culturally Diverse Students

Many teachers admitted inadequacies in their efforts to teach students from diverse backgrounds, which aids in the explanation of the current achievement gap (Tucker et al., 2005).

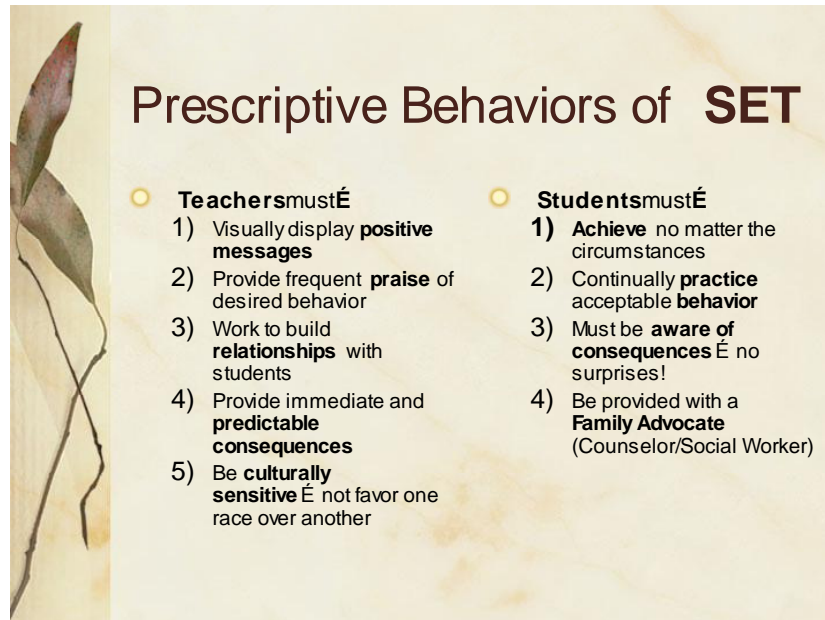
□ Tucker's **Self-Empowerment Theory** (SET) goals:

1. Empower students to meet challenges,
2. Teach students to self-assert,
3. Teach parents to self-assert,
4. Help students regulate feelings, and
5. Provide culturally responsive solutions


Unfortunately, student achievement is greatly impacted when teachers are unable to relate or understand their student's culture and experiences. Teachers, especially those of the majority, must admit their own inadequacies and ignorance to reach students of color before they are able to even receive new knowledge and instructional strategies to positively impact student achievement. Observance of these inadequacies aids to understand the current achievement gap. Through the goals of SET, teachers: (a) empower students to meet challenges, (b) teach students to self-assert, (c) teach parents to self-assert, (d) help students regulate feelings, and (e) provide culturally responsive solutions.



These strategies must be taught intentionally. Often times, a student's only resource to learn these strategies and behaviors is their teachers and the school environment. As they become adults and enter the 'real world', students of color must be able to think strategically, adapt quickly, and communicate effectively. For they are the ones who must confront the challenges of poverty, racism and discrimination daily and must be equipped with: (a) effective study methods, (b) strategies for self-motivation, (c) effective communication skills, (e) successful behaviors, (f) self-applied praise, and (g) adaptive skills.



As a part of SET, there are teacher responsibilities required to produce positive student outcomes. Teachers must: (a) visually display positive messages, (b) provide frequent praise when the desired behavior is demonstrated, (c) work to build relationships with students, (d) provide immediate and predictable consequences, and (e) be culturally sensitive by not favoring one race over another. In order to build trust and character within their students and classroom community, teachers must intentionally teach, model and practice the desired behavior. Students must face the reality that they must achieve NO MATTER WHAT! Acceptable behaviors must be noted, practiced and praised. Consequences should never be a surprise. Often times, there is a breakdown in communication between teacher, student and family. This gap can be mended quickly and effectively through the aid of a Family Advocate.




African-American Teachers and Their Efficacious Responsibility

When working with African American students, African American teachers adopt a unique method of caring known as *lifting as we climb* (Collins (1991, as cited in Ware, p.35).

- Feel connected to their students like family
- *Other mothers* – Old West African tradition of nurturing children of other mothers
 - adopt any necessary role: cheerleader, mentor, nurturer, etc.
 - *“I’m your mama until you go back home, and when you go back home, you go to your other mother.”* (Ware, 2002, p. 56)
- Provide affection to children deemed uneducable and labeled *at-risk*

Due to similar experiences, African American teachers are able to connect and relate easily with their African American students. They adopt a unique method of caring known as “lifting as we climb”. These teachers understand the need to rise to the challenge of academic and life achievements. They pursue such achievements in ways that bring others along with them on the journey... NO ONE IS TO BE OR CAN BE LEFT BEHIND. So, we “lift as we climb.” This can be noted in their communication and approach to working with African American students. Often times the tone of their conversation is firm and results in stating such phrases like, “I’m your mama until you get home. Then you go to your *other mother*.” This is rooted in the Old West African tradition of nurturing children of other mothers and assuming whatever role was necessary for the safety and success of the child.

African American teachers consider their students to be their own children and as a result, interact with their students in unique ways to communicate caring to a group of children deemed uneducable and labeled *at-risk*.

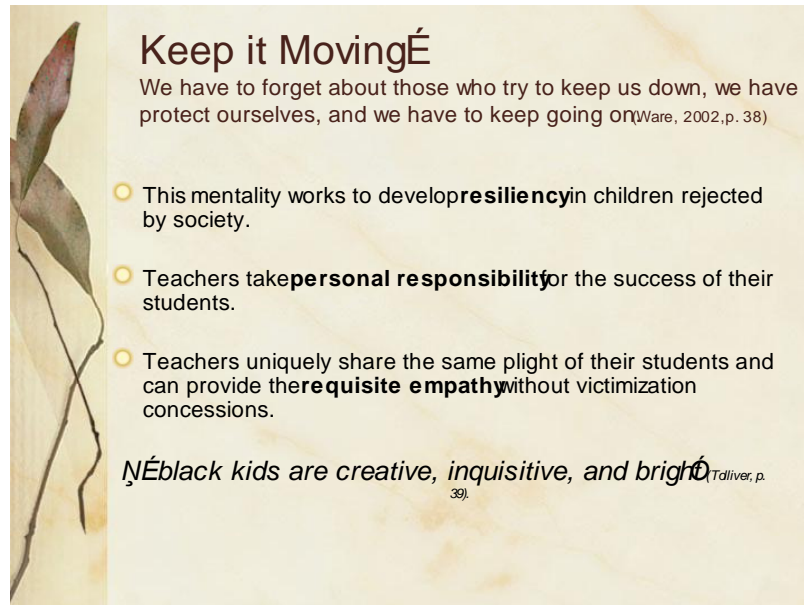


Candid Classroom Conversations

African American teachers of African American students tend to be candid in class discussions as a preparation tool for what their students will soon face.


- Conversation topics revolve around the reality of:
 - 1) gangs,
 - 2) violence,
 - 3) high drop out rates,
 - 4) diminution of test scores,
 - 5) low SES,
 - 6) single parent households
 - 7) racism

Since African American teachers have walked the path that their students will soon face, they have no qualms in sharing the realities of the world that their students are either encountering or soon will encounter. They tend to be candid in class discussions as a preparation tool for what their students will soon face. Conversation topics revolve around the reality of: (a) gangs, (b) violence, (c) high drop out rates, (d) diminution of test scores, (e) low SES, (f) single parent households, and (g) racism.



African American teachers know that before their students can thrive, they must learn certain techniques to survive. Many teachers will continue conversations that parents have started regarding what society already believes about them. However, they teach their students that “we have to forget about those who try to keep us down, we have to protect ourselves, and we have to keep going.” This mentality works to develop resiliency in children rejected by society.

The future of their students is continually on the minds of African American teachers. They personally accept the challenge to educate and nurture their students while they are in their classroom and throughout the years that follow. Since they share the same plight of their students, they can provide the requisite amount of empathy without victimization concessions. It is of the opinion of many, that African American teachers are the hardest on their students of color, especially their African American students. It is from this strength of connection that African American teachers observe that “black kids are creative, inquisitive and bright.”



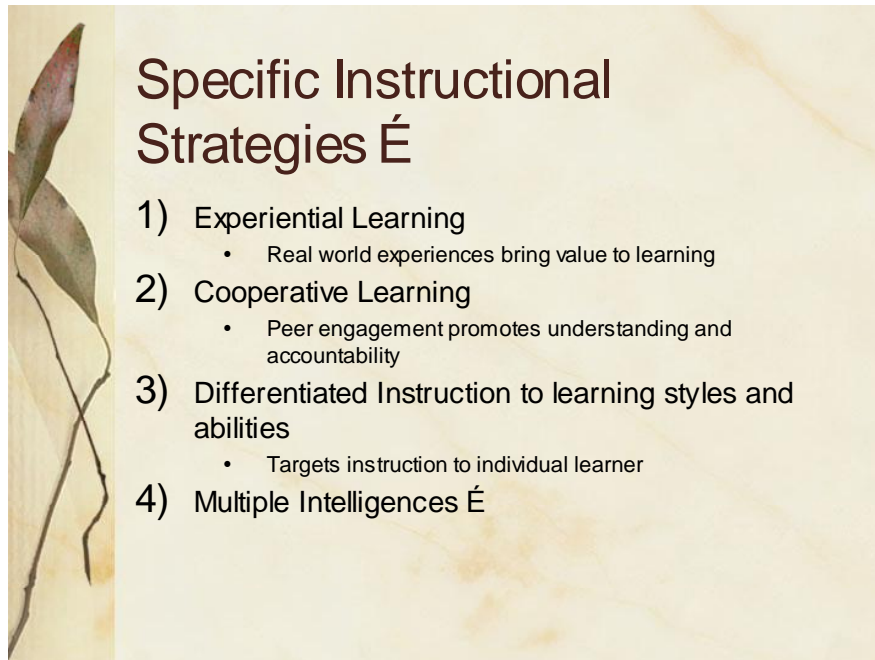
Instructional Practices

- Efficacious teachers recognize it is important to establish strong and consistent classroom management early in the academic year (Ware, 2002).

Implement Foundational Principles for learning, such as values and character education: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) respect for self and others,2) kinship,3) personal values.	Under these principles students can: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Experience a safe environment2) Avoid humiliation
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Efficacious teachers recognize it is important to establish strong and consistent classroom management early in the academic year. They also understand that the beginning part of the year is crucial to creating a caring community. Efficacious teachers strategically look for opportunities to implement character education into their curriculum. As a result, students learn to respect themselves and others. A type of kinship is developed and students begin to feel safe. As they learn the boundaries of others, they begin to reflect on their own boundaries and personal values.

Under these principles of a safe environment, students can take risks or even be corrected without reprise or humiliation from their peers.




The following are instructional strategies that promote engagement and increase student achievement, thereby increasing teacher efficacy. Each of these strategies seeks to personalize the learning environment. Experiential Learning is the opportunity to connect classroom learning to the real world. Cooperative Learning allows students to learn through engaging with their peers. This promotes understanding and accountability. Differentiated Instruction according to the various learning styles and abilities allows students to receive instruction targeted specifically to them. Due to the amount of success Multiple Intelligence Theory has had in the classroom, this researcher chose this strategy for discussion.



Through his research, Gardner identified eight different intelligences: (a) verbal/linguistic (individuals are word smart and learn through reading and writing), (b) mathematical/logical (individuals are math smart and learn through numbers and logic), (c) interpersonal (individuals are people smart and learn through interacting with others), (d) intrapersonal (individuals are self-smart and learn through introspection), (e) visual/spatial (individuals are art/space smart and learn through visuals), (f) bodily/kinesthetic (individuals are body smart and learn through “hands on” activities), (g) musical/rhythmic (individuals are music smart and learn through music and lyrics, and (h) naturalistic (individuals are nature smart and learn through observation, sorting and classifying).

Which three of the intelligences listed best describe your learning style? Which intelligence best describes your students as a whole? Think of your most challenging students, which intelligence best describes their learning style? How has this knowledge impacted the ways in which you deliver instruction?



Instruction through MI Theory

The use of MI theory:

- 1) Maximizes learning objectives,
- 2) Leads to gains on standardized tests,
- 3) Reduces the achievement gap,
- 4) Improves behavior,
- 5) Aids in the inclusion of special needs students,
- 6) Promotes parent involvement,
- 7) Improves critical thinking and problem solving skills, and
- 8) Cultivates a positive learning environment

Campbell and Campbell (1999, as cited in Shore, 2004)

MI theory and its implementation in the classroom provides the following benefits. It: (a) maximizes learning objectives, (b) leads to gains on standardized tests, (c) reduces the achievement gap, (d) improves behavior, (e) aids in the inclusion of special needs students, (f) promotes parent involvement, (g) improves critical thinking and problem solving skills, and (f) cultivates a positive learning environment. What results have you seen through the use and implementation of MI theory in your classroom? Which benefit would be most valuable to you at present?



Due to low student achievement, low retention of quality teachers, and low global performance, the current U.S. educational system is of great concern to its stakeholders. Teachers truly are the core to school reform and must be valued as such. The focus of reform should revolve around ways to support efficacious teachers so that their talent and skills are retained. They need opportunities to be renewed and developed throughout their career. Teachers must also be supported by effective leadership through the provision of professional development. Policy makers and school administrators must work to mediate the change our educational system needs. Teachers should embrace and pursue professional development in order to increase their internal belief that they have the power to impact **all of their students**. They must do *whatever it takes*.

Chapter Summary

School reform has become a top of priority for teachers, administrators, parents, and policy makers today. Through this presentation, this author reviewed various philosophies and methodologies available to increase teacher efficacy, the belief that one has the talent and ability to positively impact student achievement. Since teacher efficacy is directly linked to student achievement, it is imperative that teachers and administrators alike look for strategic ways in increase teacher efficacy. In Chapter 5, discussion and colleague reviews of the power point presentation are presented.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION

The current state of education in the U.S. with low student achievement, low student test scores and low global performance has caused stakeholders to examine the practices, philosophies, methodologies and qualifications of teachers. With teachers at the core to school reform, it is imperative that teachers are provided with an environment conducive to their professional growth so that the departure of quality of teachers is reduced.

Contribution of the Project

This author sought to review various methodologies to increase teacher efficacy and thereby empower teachers to become positive change agents within their profession. The intent of the project was to generate rich discussion with teachers, administrators and other stakeholders in education with an overall desired outcome of a positive impact on student achievement.

Resolution of the Original Problem

The power point presentation created by this researcher was presented to five teachers and one administrator for review. All of the teachers and the administrator were familiar with the subject of teacher efficacy. Most participants were introduced to the topic during their pursuit of master's degrees. All participants had experience working with highly impacted populations in which more than 50 percent of the school's

population received free and reduced lunch. The variance of years working with these populations ranged from three years to ten years.

Four out of five participants attributed an increase to their own personal efficacy to professional development either provided within their own school, school district or master's degree program. Referring to the research of Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2007) regarding the mentality of low efficacy teachers thinking that home environment dictates student motivation one participant stated, "I used to have the home environment rules achievement mentality. Getting a master's degree in administration myself gave me the opportunity to educate myself and was the single most transformational experience I've had as a teacher." Another participant found that the greatest contributor to her personal efficacy was working in a professional working environment. "Having supportive professional relationships that help us view what is *good* rather than a feeling of punishment for low test-scores affects efficacy and teacher development. When we can feel successful, we can safely and energetically pursue personal and professional growth."

Information considered to be new from the viewpoint of the participants of the study was the approach African-American teachers take in their interactions with African American students. Specifically, two participants commented that the concepts presented in the Self Empowerment Theory developed by Tucker (Tucker et al., 2005) were new. Other participants were unaware of studies that sought to examine the methods and strategies unique to the relationship between African American teachers and their African American students.

Several participants commented that the presentation greatly reinforced the need for teachers of high efficacy to be in the classroom in order to improve education. One participant took personal responsibility for the variance in his levels of efficacy and commented, “My attitude is infused into my students whether I realize it or not...this [serves as] a powerful tool or a weapon.” Another participant realized the importance of establishing a caring and safe environment where students feel motivated, engaged and motivated.

All participants of the study thought that the information presented in the power point would be beneficial for administrators and teachers, especially teachers of high efficacy in order to affirm their efforts.

Limitations to the Project

Although this researcher located an ample supply of research regarding the topic of Teacher Efficacy, research relative to successful teacher interactions with students of color besides African American students was not included. Research targeted specifically for successful teacher interactions between Hispanic, Asian, and other ethnic groups would provide even more beneficial information to teachers who desire to raise their level of efficacy for interacting with these students. This researcher chose to focus this work on African American students. Based on personal observations, it is from this group that a considerable amount of challenges arise for both teacher and student.

Another limitation of the project was the consideration of the amount of time chosen to gather the observations and feedback regarding the topic and its presentation format. Teacher feedback would have been drastically different and perhaps more

meaningful had the participants been asked to track their levels of efficacy over a specific period of time. The research would have been further enriched by the provision of opportunities for professional development and participation in PLC's. Afterwards, individuals would be able to better report the variances in their levels of efficacy and its impact on student achievement. Also, the results of the feedback would have been different if teachers who were unfamiliar with teacher efficacy been included in the survey.

Recommendations for Future Research and Study

The main finding of this study was that teacher efficacy truly is the heart of school reform. The common theme throughout the study was the need for quality teachers simply because teachers directly affect student achievement more than any other factor. It is apparent that teachers must be supported in their growth professionally. Leaders who are able to aid in teachers' individual pursuit of professional goals reap the benefit of higher retention and greater job satisfaction from the perspective of teachers. As administrators provide opportunities for teachers to grow professionally through participation in activities, such as Professional Learning Communities, it is the responsibility of each individual teacher to take advantage of said opportunities, especially when there is a certain level of risk involved.

This researcher recommends more studies regarding methods to increase the efficacy of entire staff teams be researched. Such research would provide administrators concrete strategies to affect unhealthy school environments. In recognition that teachers who work in diverse populations generally encounter a variety of ethnic groups, this

researcher recommends that more studies examine successful interactions between teachers and minority students be researched.

Project Summary

It is apparent that student achievement is of great concern to the stakeholders of the U.S. educational system. It is the opinion of this researcher that teachers truly are the core to school reform and must be valued as such. It is suggested that more time should be spent in pursuit of strategies and methodologies that seek to support efficacious teachers so that their talent and skills are retained. Policy makers and school administrators must work to mediate the change our educational system needs. They must confront the realities of the difficulties that teachers face daily and provide concrete solutions rather than scrutiny and penalties. Teachers should embrace and pursue professional development in order to increase their internal belief, the belief that they have the power to impact all students. They should seek positive professional relationships of encouragement and accountability. Finally, they must be brave and take risks in the classroom daily. All in all, they must do whatever it takes.

APPENDIX A

Teacher Efficacy Survey

Name _____ Date _____

1. How long have you been teaching?

2. What grades have you taught?

3. How much background knowledge did you have concerning this topic before reading this power point presentation? Please explain.

4. Have you had the opportunity to work in highly impacted populations? Please describe your experiences including time frames.

5. Have you noticed any changes in your own levels of teacher efficacy?
Cite two specific examples.

6. What would you attribute the variance in levels of efficacy that you cited earlier to (student population, levels of support, professional development or other external factors)?

7. What information was new for you during this presentation?

8. What information was reinforced during this presentation?

9. What would you like to know more about regarding this topic?

10. Who do you think could benefit most from observing this presentation?

11. What additional training, relative to this topic, would you like to see in the future?

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